

1989

Information technology in youth agencies : a rural perspective

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Western Australian College of Advanced Education

Centre for the Development of Human Resources

**Information Technology in Youth Agencies:
A Rural Perspective**

*Roderic Underwood
and
Barry Sheridan*

Technical Report No. 15

July 1989

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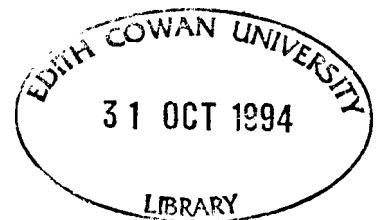
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank those people in rural youth agencies who gave their time to complete the questionnaire used in this study. We also wish to acknowledge the assistance of Professor Paula Nurius, School of Social Work at the University of Washington in preparing the questionnaire. Thanks go to our colleagues in the WA College of Advanced Education and in youth agencies who provided feedback on draft versions of the survey instrument. We also wish to express our appreciation for the efforts of our research assistant, Fiona Underwood, in gathering much of the information for the study. Barbara Gordon and Patricia Nicoll were involved in the preparation of the questionnaire and the final report.

This project was funded by a research grant made available by the Western Australian College of Advanced Education.

ROD UNDERWOOD
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ABSTRACT

A survey of rural youth agencies investigated current or projected applications of computer technology to agency management and service delivery. The expectations of agency administrators regarding computer usage by youth workers, the nature of training provided or considered desirable, and identification of issues critical to the applications of computer technology in rural youth services were studied. Youth agencies generally recognised that computers have the potential to enhance the quality of service provision. The lack of formal training in the use of computers may have serious implications for future developments.

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INTRODUCTION

During the past decade significant advances have been made in the application of computer technology to human service organisations. These advances may be attributed, in large part, to two factors. First, developments in computer networking has made it possible for large organisations to provide regional offices with on-line access to host data bases. Second, advances in the development of the personal computer (PC) has enabled smaller agencies to acquire the technology required to meet their needs for a relatively small investment.

A number of studies have examined the implications for the human services of the expanding information technology (Boyd, Hilton & Price, 1978; Glastonbury, 1985; Nurius, Hooyman & Nicoll, 1988). Other studies have concentrated on particular areas of the human service field; for example, in children's services (Friedman, 1980), or mental health services (Cocks, 1976). It is clear that the different human service domains, while having common needs that may be serviced by computers, also have unique requirements that can be addressed by such technology. In all fields the computer can be used for administrative tasks such as record-keeping, management of accounts and budgets and the preparation of statistical returns. However, for people with disabilities, for example, there is enormous potential for the use of computer-aided communication or using computer technology to compensate for motor impairments (Workman, Geggie & Creasey, 1988). Gerontological applications include monitoring the well-being of the aged in a variety of different ways, as well as being used for therapeutic and rehabilitative purposes (Hollander & Plummer 1986). Computer-assisted learning is used extensively with children in out-of-school activities as well as in formal educational settings (Constantine, 1985). Each of these applications demands different knowledge and understanding of computer technology on behalf of the professional human service worker.

In the field of youth work, computer technology is being applied to a range of activities associated with service delivery. Computerised data bases have been established by organisations for a variety of purposes. An application of particular interest to some youth agencies is providing unemployed young people with basic end-user skills such as word processing and data base management. In recent years agencies have shown a growing interest in desk-top publishing for the production of newsletters, brochures and other publications. In spite of the developments taking place there has been little research undertaken on the utilisation of computers in youth agencies.

The purposes of the present study were to provide information on:

- * the types of hardware, software and applications used in current, or projected, agency activities;
- * the extent to which youth workers are currently, or may become, direct users of computers;
- * the expectations of agency administrators regarding direct involvement with computers by youth workers;
- * the types of training courses provided by youth work agencies for employees;
- * the types of computer-related training desirable for youth work students and graduates;
- * changing role definitions for youth workers who have specific computer skills relative to those without such skills;
- * critical issues regarding current and projected computer utilisation by youth work agencies.

This report focusses on youth agencies located in the rural areas of Western Australia in an attempt to identify issues that may arise as a result of geographical isolation. Questions such as how isolation has impeded the utilisation of computer technology in agencies, and limitations on training opportunities for staff as a function of distance, were of particular concern.

PROCEDURE

A pilot study was conducted to trial the questionnaire and to evaluate different data collection strategies. Ten metropolitan youth agencies participated in this pilot study. Selection was determined by including agencies delivering different services, (e.g. accommodation, street work, substance abuse, etc.), the size of the agency and the agency funding authority. These variables were considered to be critical in any examination of current, or planned, utilisation of computers.

The agency director was requested to nominate the member of staff most familiar with computer technology to answer the questionnaire. Respondents were either interviewed directly or by telephone. The investigators believed that the telephone interview may be a more successful strategy for gathering data from rural agencies than a direct mail-out procedure with attendant low rates of response. It was found that the telephone interview could not be completed in less than an hour, thus making it an inappropriate data collection option.

Minor amendments were made to the questionnaire as a result of the feedback obtained from the interviews (see appendix). The questionnaire was then distributed to three rural youth agencies which had agreed to participate in the pilot study. On return of the questionnaire the agencies were again contacted. The follow-up interview sought to identify any problems associated with completing the questionnaire under mail-out conditions. According to all three agencies the questions were unambiguous and relatively straightforward to answer. Respondents took about 40 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Feedback was sought from all participants in the pilot study regarding the perceived value of the investigation. It was affirmed that such a study was particularly relevant to the youth work field given the current developments taking place in computer applications to agency management and service provision.

A directory of rural youth agencies was obtained from the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia. The questionnaire was mailed to 47 agencies operating throughout the State. Agencies were requested to complete and return the questionnaire within two weeks of the date of distribution. Where possible, a telephone follow-up call was made to non-responding agencies in the week after the due date of return.

Five questionnaires were returned as "Address Unknown". Fifteen completed questionnaires were received, representing a response rate of 35 per cent. The follow-up reminder call indicated that some agencies had, in fact, ceased to operate. While the data on this matter is incomplete because some organisations did not have a telephone number, it does indicate that the response rate is consistent with this method of data collection.

FINDINGS

Agency Characteristics

The fifteen agencies that responded to the questionnaire reflected the diversity of organizations providing services to rural youth. The geographic location of the agencies ranged from 150 km to 3000 km beyond the metropolitan area of Perth. They were located in towns with a population of less than 1000 through to towns of 25000.

The agencies were funded or sponsored by church or community organisations, local governments, federal or state government employment programmes such as the Youth Employment Scheme or Skillshare. Nearly 50 per cent ($N = 7$) of the agencies have been operational for less than two years; while 40 per cent ($N = 6$) have been operational more than five years. Table 1 indicates the primary areas of service involvement. In responding to this question most agencies identified at least two areas.

Table 1. Types of agency services

<u>Area of Involvement</u>	<u>No of Agencies</u>
Unemployment	7
Accommodation	4
Drop-in Centre	9
Substance Abuse	2
Recreation	6

Eight agencies indicated that Aborigines form a significant portion of their clientele.

The number of staff employed in the agencies ranged from one organisation with only two part-time staff through to an organisation employing seven full-time members of staff. Organisations were assisted by up to thirty volunteers. The typical agency might be characterised as one employing two full-time and one part-time staff with perhaps ten volunteers.

The number of individual young people in contact with each agency in a normal month ranged from fifteen through to two hundred. Most agencies would have contact with between fifty and seventy young people each month.

On average, agencies spent approximately one-third of total staff time on administrative duties and committee work and two thirds time on direct service activities. However, the percentage of time allocated to the different categories of activities varied significantly between agencies. One agency, for example, was not involved at all in the provision of direct services.

Computing Equipment

Nine agencies reported that they currently used computers; two agencies planned to acquire a computer in the next two years and four agencies had no plans to acquire a computer in the next five years. Eight of the agencies using computers had PC's. One agency had a mini-computer. Three agencies had as many as ten microcomputers which were used for instructional purposes with unemployed young people.

Computer usage was categorised into 'Service or Client Based Tasks' and 'Administration Based Tasks'. In the former category the most frequently reported purpose was 'Information and Referral' followed by 'Client Assessment', 'Research Projects' and 'Case Notes'. The most frequently reported administrative tasks were production of newsletters, preparation of budgets, reports, accounts, workload management and staff assessment.

As would be expected given the fact that most agencies only employed two or three staff, direct service workers were the major users of computers. This finding has clear implications for the training and education of youth workers.

Attitudes to Computer Technology

All agencies that participated in the survey, with one exception, agreed that computers can contribute to improving the delivery of services. Seven agencies reported that it was 'very important' or 'rather important' to allocate resources to computing. Six agencies indicated that it was 'somewhat important' and two agencies said that it was 'not at all important' to allocate resources.

The notion that computers may 'dehumanise' the services offered by agencies was not supported. Eleven agencies reported that they were 'not at all concerned' about the issue of 'dehumanisation', while three agencies expressed 'slight concern'.

Computer Skills of Youth Workers

A majority of agencies (N = 11) reported that it was important for youth workers to have an understanding of the social implications of computers (e.g. privacy of information).

Again, most agencies (N = 13) indicated that it was an advantage for youth workers in their agency to have hands-on experience with computers.

Only one respondent reported that youth workers employed by their agency acquired computer skills as part of their tertiary studies. Fifty per cent of agencies reported that youth workers acquired skills through self-instruction. Other avenues of training included those opportunities as provided by the agency, TAFE courses and courses provided by former employers.

In terms of employing professional youth work staff most agencies preferred that applicants, while not having to be proficient in using computers, must be willing to be trained to meet the needs of the agency. A strong preference was also expressed by agencies for youth workers to be able to conceptualise questions and operationalise them in terms of the computer system.

Barriers to Future Developments

Two major barriers likely to inhibit agencies reaching their goals regarding computerisation within the next five years were identified. First, there is the issue of funds. Even with the diminishing prices of computer hardware that have occurred the technology remains a relatively expensive item in the constrained budgets of most agencies. The second most frequently reported difficulty was the availability of trained personnel.

The survey did not find that barriers to computerisation existed which could be described as being a function of rural-based agencies. Few agencies reported difficulties in obtaining access to computer facilities for training purposes. Most country towns appear to be well-served by TAFE colleges. However, the extent to which courses available through TAFE address those issues relevant to the introduction of computer technology to human services should be reviewed. The major impediment to training appears to be the lack of available time to undertake such training. This problem is, of course, not unique to rural youth workers. Similar findings are reported by Levitan and Willis (1985) who surveyed human service professionals in the United States.

Agencies most frequently expressed concern about time/money expenditures involved in current or projected computerisation. Five agencies reported that they had no major concerns regarding developments in computing. Only two agencies indicated that they were concerned about ethical and security risks associated with computerisation.

DISCUSSION

The evidence obtained from the survey suggests that rural youth agencies generally recognise that information technology will form an integral part of service delivery in the future. Youth workers do not appear to be concerned about the introduction of computers into agencies. Perhaps the mystique associated with computers ten years ago has been largely dissipated by the ubiquitous word processor.

While most agencies indicated that they do not require youth workers to possess computer skills to any level of sophistication, it is clear that they foresee the time when youth workers will be expected to be competent end-users of a range of computer applications. The youth worker who is able to function as an informed participant in agency level planning and decision-making regarding the role and use of computers in the agency will make a valuable contribution to the capacity of the agency to deliver services.

Computer technology is not only being used for administrative tasks such as budgets, reports and workload management, but is also being applied to service and client based tasks such as assessment and referral. Two issues of concern arise out of the use of information technology for direct service functions. The successful use of data bases for referral purposes depends largely on the currency of the information. In a field that is significantly dependent upon government sponsored projects which come and go on the basis of political decisions, it is particularly difficult to maintain up-to-date information on community services. The management of community service directories is costly in terms of the time that must be committed not only to the initial establishment, but also to the continued maintenance. Nevertheless, a computerised data-base remains the most effective solution available.

A less obvious problem and hence one that is more difficult to resolve, is the quality of the programmes being used for psychological assessment purposes. The field of psychometric assessment is littered with test batteries that have few redeeming features. These tests frequently lack evidence of validity, do not meet the minimal requirements of reliability and are poorly standardised, yet for one reason or another become widely used by uncritical consumers. Should these tests find their way into

computers of rural agencies then a serious educational effort will be needed to ensure that they are used appropriately. Sampson (1986) cautions that it is not clear that using computer technology will make counsellors more effective, and believes it is imperative that comprehensive professional standards and guidelines related to the use of computers be developed.

The apparent lack of awareness of the problems associated with the introduction of computer technology into the human services may be attributed, at least in part, to the limited background in computing of agency personnel. Most respondents indicated that they had developed their computer skills through self-instruction. The fact that they were able to do so is a tribute to the quality of programmes now marketed commercially. Nevertheless, it must remain a concern that youth workers have not received formal training in the applications of computer technology to the human services. It is interesting to note that in a USA national survey of school psychologists by Jacob and Brantley (1987), one-third of the respondents reported that ethical-legal problems with computer use had occurred.

The potentially negative aspects of computer applications in the human services have been clearly documented in recent years. In an examination of the impact of computerisation on record keeping Holbrook (1986) identified as issues of concern the confidentiality of client information, the possibility of computerised records having labelling effects on the clients, and the process of data distortion. As government departments establish comprehensive client data bases integrated into extensive computer networks the issues raised by Holbrook will become more critical.

While the utilisation of computers may well facilitate the processing of certain administrative tasks there is evidence to indicate that this does not necessarily result in the enhanced quality of services delivered (Cummings, 1986; Glastonbury, 1985, Murphy & Pardeck, 1986). According to Sampson (1986) the misuse of technology, excessive dependence on it, and restricted counselling procedures may occur as a result of uncritical usage.

Given the fact that recent overseas developments in the application of computer technology to the management and provision of human services have yet to be employed extensively in Australia the potential for misusing such technology is greater than at present. One particular development is the application of 'decision support systems' or 'expert systems' to the field of human services. Basically, these systems generate an individualised management plan derived from information organised around a client data base. To date, decision support systems have been applied, with varying degrees of success, to areas such as placement planning in child welfare services (Scheurman & Vogel, 1986), designing residential services for the developmentally disabled (Gardner et al, 1986), diagnosis and treatment of learning disabled children (Hofmeister & Lubbe, 1986), institutional behaviour management (Gardner, 1985) and family therapy (Mead et al, 1985). It is reasonable to predict that youth workers will be required to work with computer-based decision support systems in the near future.

The issues associated with the introduction of computer technology into youth agencies can be addressed to some extent by general educational courses and specific training programmes. Such programmes should include the following components:

1. End-user skills. It is reasonable to expect that graduates will have some proficiency in word processing and an understanding of spread sheet functions and data base management. Students with an interest in computing should have the opportunity to develop skills in computer graphics and desk-top publishing. Potential human service applications such as information and referral systems, client assessment and volunteer matching should be introduced.
2. Computer management. It has been the experience of too many agencies that investment in computer technology has yielded negligible dividends as a result of ill-informed decisions. Staff should have a sense of the process of matching the requirements of the agency to the capability of the computer and peripheral devices. Issues such as compatibility of hardware and software need to be considered.

3. Social issues. In addition to the issues already raised such as confidentiality of information, client labelling effects, distortion of client data and restricted counselling procedures a computer education programme for human service workers should address issues such as the security risks associated with information technology and the potentially negative reactions of colleagues and clients to such technology.

It should be pointed out that no criticism of the training of youth workers is intended here. The fact of the matter is that the advances in computing have been so rapid in the past decade that only recent graduates are likely to have had the opportunity to have undertaken relevant studies. However, there is a clear responsibility on the part of those institutions involved in the training of youth workers to ensure that graduates have the requisite knowledge to function effectively in a technological environment.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study has provided evidence that, in general, rural youth agencies are positively disposed towards the application of computers to the delivery of services. It is apparent that computer technology will play an increasingly important and diverse role in the management of agency functions and service provisions in the immediate future. On the agenda for the occupational development of youth workers should be:

- * clarifying the meaning of technology as applied to youth services;
- * identifying the role of the youth worker in a technological environment;
- * encouraging appropriate preparation of youth workers in the use of technology;
- * stimulating attention to the ethical issues and problems generated by technology.

It is hoped that the significance of these issues will be recognised by tertiary institutions, youth affairs organisations and employers as well as by youth workers.

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APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION

COMPUTER UTILISATION IN YOUTH WORK AGENCIES

As part of the on-going process of monitoring the curriculum of the Youth Work programme offered by the College, the Department of Community and Behavioural Studies is conducting a survey of computer utilisation in youth work agencies. The questionnaire has been designed to provide information on:

1. the types of hardware, software and applications used in current and projected activities;
2. the extent to which youth workers are currently, or may become, direct computer users;
3. the expectations of agency administrators regarding direct involvement with computers by youth workers;
4. the types of training courses provided by youth work agencies for employees;
5. the types of computer-related training desirable for students and graduates;
6. changing role definitions for youth workers who have specific computer skills relative to those without such skills;
7. critical issues regarding current and projected computer utilisation by youth work agencies.

The information collected will be used to ensure that youth work students are adequately prepared to meet the demands of agencies in their future roles as youth workers.

To assist people who may not be familiar with some of the computer terminology a glossary is included on the last page of the questionnaire.

In most questions you are asked to indicate your answer by placing a tick, or by writing a number in the appropriate box. For the remaining questions, you are invited to write brief comments.

THANKYOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

SECTION 1 : DESCRIPTION OF THE AGENCY

1. Agency Name _____
Address _____
Post Code _____
Contact Person _____ Phone _____
2. How long ago was your agency established?
- 0 - 2 years ☐
3 - 5 years ☐
6 - 10 years ☐
11 - 20 years ☐
over 20 years ☐
3. Is your agency primarily responsible for:
- Direct Service to young people ☐
Policy Co-ordination ☐
Other (please specify) ☐
- _____
4. Please indicate the area(s) in which your agency is primarily involved:
- Employment/Unemployment ☐
Youth Accommodation ☐
Drop-in-Centre ☐
Substance Abuse ☐
Leisure/Recreation ☐
Aboriginals ☐
Ethnic Groups ☐
Other (please specify) ☐
- _____
5. To help us get a sense of your agency size please indicate, for each category listed below, your current number of:
- Full-time employees (over 20 hours/week)
Part-time employees (less than 20 hours/week)
Management Committee Members
Volunteers
6. If your agency has contact with young people then in a normal month what is:
- the total number of contacts
the number of individual young people
7. Please estimate the total number of hours per week staff members serve in each of the following roles in your agency:
- Direct Service to young people
Administration
Committee Work

For question 8 through question 10, please rate the level of your response by circling the appropriate number on each of the 4-point scales provided.

8. To what extent do you agree that computers can contribute to improved service delivery in your agency?

1	2	3	4
Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9. How important is it for your agency to allocate resources to computing?

1	2	3	4
Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Rather Important	Very Important

10. How concerned are you that computers may dehumanise the services offered by your agency?

1	2	3	4
Very Concerned	Concerned	Slightly Concerned	Not at all Concerned

SECTION 2 : DESCRIPTION OF COMPUTING EQUIPMENT

11. For the COMPUTERS listed, indicate those your agency owns, uses or plans to use in the next several years?

(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes).

	USE PRESENTLY	PLAN TO USE IN NEXT 1 to 2 YEARS	3 to 5 YEARS
Mainframe Computer (IBM, Cyber etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mini-Computer (Vax, Dec, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Micro-Computers (Amstrad, MacIntosh, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Please identify the specific names (manufacturers) of the computer(s) your agency uses, if any.

Mainframe

Mini-Computer

Micro-Computers (PC's)

13. Please specify the number of terminals your agency has linked to mini or mainframe computers (either direct lines or connected with a modem).

Number of Terminals

14. Please specify the number of micro-computers your agency owns or uses.

Number of Micros

15. For the SOFTWARE APPLICATION categories listed, indicate those your agency owns, uses or plans to use in the next several years?
(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes).

	USE PRESENTLY	PLAN TO USE IN NEXT	
		1 to 2 YEARS	3 to 5 YEARS
Word Processing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electronic Spreadsheets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data Base Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Statistical Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graphics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Client Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication (with other computers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. If you ticked any boxes in Question 15 please identify the specific names of software packages used in your agency.

Word Processing (eg. MS Word):

Spreadsheets (eg. PC CALC):

Finances (eg. ACCOUNT 1):

Data Base (eg. dBASE III):

Statistics (eg. SPSS):

Graphics (eg. Fontasy):

Assessment of Young People (eg. Career Mate):

Other (please specify):

17. Does your agency use public data bases? (eg. Infolink, ABS Census data)

YES ☐

NO ☐

If YES, please describe which data bases.

18. Does your agency use specially written software?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If YES, please describe briefly.

SECTION 3 : USE(S) OF COMPUTERS IN YOUR AGENCY

19. For the SERVICE AND CLIENT BASED TASKS listed, indicate those your agency performs, or plans to computerise in the next several years?

(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes).

		PLAN TO USE IN NEXT	
	COMPUTERISE PRESENTLY	1 to 2 YEARS	3 to 5 YEARS
Assessment of Young People	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Case Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research Projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information & Referral	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other [please specify]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. For the ADMINISTRATION BASED TASKS listed, indicate those your agency performs, or plans to computerise in the next several years?

(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes).

		PLAN TO USE IN NEXT	
	COMPUTERISE PRESENTLY	1 to 2 YEARS	3 to 5 YEARS
Accounts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workload Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budgets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other [please specify]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. For those SERVICE AND CLIENT BASED TASKS that are computerised, please indicate who in your agency presently uses a computer to perform them.

(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes).

	ADMIN OFFICERS	CLERICAL STAFF	COMPUTER SPECIALIST	DIRECT SERVICE WORKERS	OTHER
Client Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Case Notes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research Projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information and Retrieval	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other [please specify]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. For those ADMINISTRATION BASED TASKS that are computerised, please indicate who in your agency presently uses a computer to perform them.

(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes).

	ADMIN OFFICERS	CLERICAL STAFF	COMPUTER SPECIALIST	DIRECT SERVICE WORKERS	OTHER
Accounts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workload Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budgets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newsletters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. Does your agency have any computers for instructional purposes, eg. to teach word processing to young people?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If YES, how many computers do you have? ☐

What is taught on the computers, eg. programming, word processing?

Who is being taught, eg. unemployed young women?

24. If your agency does NOT currently, or plan to, use computers please indicate the reasons why.
(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes).

Computerisation is not needed ☐

Lack of Funds ☐

Lack of computer training or skills among staff ☐

Staff resistance ☐

Lack of administrative support ☐

Other (Please specify) ☐

SECTION 4 : COMPUTER SKILLS OF YOUTH WORKERS

For question 25 and question 26, please rate the level of your response by circling the appropriate number on each of the 4-point scales provided.

25. How important do you think it is for youth workers in your agency to have an understanding of the social implications of computers? (eg. privacy of information)

1	2	3	4
Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Rather Important	Very Important

26. How important do you think it is for youth workers in your agency to have hands-on experience with computers?

1	2	3	4
Not at all Important	Somewhat Important	Rather Important	Very Important

27. Do you currently have a staff person specifically responsible for providing computer training to your other staff?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If YES, is that person a graduate youth worker? YES ☐

NO ☐

What percentage of that person's time is devoted specifically to computer training?

Up to 25% ☐

26 to 50% ☐

51 to 75% ☐

More than 75% ☐

28. What types of computer training has your agency provided to professional staff (ie. positions that could be filled by a youth worker?)

(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes)

None to date	<input type="checkbox"/>
In-service workshops to orient staff generally to the uses of computers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialised in-service workshops to train staff to use a particular software program	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual consultation with an in-house technical consultant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual consultation with an outside technical consultant	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sponsored staff to attend computer workshops outside your agency	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

29. How did youth workers in your agency acquire skills in computing?

(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes)

Through training opportunities provided by your agency	<input type="checkbox"/>
As part of their tertiary studies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enrolling in a computer course in their own time (eg. TAFE Adult Education Course)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>

30. When you hire new professional staff, what is your preference, in rank order from 1 to 6, regarding their level of computer proficiency?

(Indicate your **FIRST** preference by placing a '1' in the box to the right of the **ASPECT** selected; your **SECOND** preference with a '2', and so on)

No involvement with computers, thus no proficiency is needed ☐

Need not be computer proficient, but must be willing to be trained to meet agency's needs ☐

Be able to conceptualise questions and operationalise them in terms of the computer system but not necessary to have hands-on skills. ☐

Be able to function as informed participants in agency level planning and decision-making regarding the role and use of computers in the agency. ☐

Be able to operate the computer as well as understand the output. ☐

Be able to trouble-shoot problems with the computer and/or be able to write computer programs to some extent. ☐

SECTION 5 : FURTHER ISSUES

31. In what areas have you seen or do you expect to see positive contributions made by use of a computer?

(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes)

None, the agency does not use a computer ☐

Information source ☐

Time efficiency (eg paper processing) ☐

Decision-making ☐

Supervision ☐

Cost efficiency ☐

Client satisfaction ☐

Quality of services ☐

Research/Evaluation ☐

Report writing ☐

Staff-administration relationships ☐

Agency-community relations (eg funding sources, government) ☐

Other (Please specify) ☐

32. Do you foresee any barriers that may inhibit your agency in reaching its goals regarding computerisation within the next five years?

YES ☐

NO ☐

If YES, what do these include?

33. A number of issues regarding computer utilisation in youth work agencies are specific to rural areas. If you have had experience as a rural youth worker you may wish to comment on the following.

Access to computer facilities:

Barriers to computer training:

Suggested ways of providing computer training:

34. Do you have any major concerns about current or projected computerization in your agency?

(Please tick ALL the appropriate boxes)

- No, nothing major ☐
- Ethical risks ☐
- Security risks ☐
- Negative staff reaction ☐
- Effects of automation shaping service provision ☐
- Morale ☐
- Staff-administrative relationships ☐
- Time/money expenditures ☐
- Negative client reaction ☐
- Other (Please specify) ☐

SECTION 6 IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The Department of Community and Behavioural Studies is willing to develop provision for in-service training for different areas of computer utilisation.

35. Would your agency be interested in the provision of this form of in-service training? YES ☐
- NO ☐

If YES, please indicate your order of importance for the following aspects of computer utilisation:

(Indicate your **FIRST** preference by placing a '1' in the box
to the right of the **ASPECT** selected;
your **SECOND** preference with a '2', and so on)

- Word Processing ☐
- Spread Sheets ☐
- Data Bases ☐
- Graphics ☐
- Statistics ☐
- Other (please specify) ☐

36. Based on the assumption of a 10 hour in-service schedule please indicate, for the following options, the most effective mode of delivery of such a course for staff in your agency:

(Indicate your **FIRST** preference by placing a '1' in the box to the right of the **MODE** selected; your **SECOND** preference with a '2', and so on)

OPTION A: Two day workshop (9:00 am to 3:00 pm) ☐

Please indicate preferred days of week: _____
and: _____

OPTION B: ONE day a week over TWO weeks ☐

Please indicate preferred day of the week: _____

OPTION C: HALF-DAY a week over FOUR weeks ☐

Please indicate preferred day of the week: _____
and time of day (circle preference): _____ am OR pm

OPTION D: Two hours an evening over FIVE weeks ☐

Please indicate preferred day of the week: _____
and time of day: _____

OPTION E: OTHER ☐

Please provide details: _____

37. Are you able to comment on the current preparation in computing for youth work students by the College?

38. Thinking about the overall computer needs and resources of your agency, what are ways that the College could better prepare students to meet such needs?

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

**PLEASE PLACE THIS COMPLETED
SURVEY IN THE REPLY-PAID
ENVELOPE ENCLOSED**

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Mainframe Computer	A large computer with many terminals. The terminals on the front desk of Medibank offices are connected to a mainframe computer.
Minicomputer	Will support a number of terminals. A small business may have four to six terminals connected to a minicomputer.
Microcomputer	Can only be used by one person at any time. Examples of microcomputers are Apple, Commodore, Atari.
Word Processing	Software which permits users to enter, store, manipulate and print text. The word processor has replaced the typewriter.
Electronic Spreadsheet	Software which permits users to work with the rows and columns of a matrix (a spreadsheet) of data. Widely used in business by accountants.
Database	Software which permits users to create and maintain a data base and to extract information. A database may consist of names and addresses of clients.
Graphics	Software which permits users to create charts, drawings and fancy lettering. Useful for producing newsletters.
Personal Computer (PC)	See microcomputer.
Modem	A device that transmits data over a telephone line, thus connecting a terminal to a mainframe or one microcomputer to another.

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(DETACH IF PREFERRED)

FOLLOW UP DETAILS

I would be interested in receiving any information on any proposed in-service course planned by the College as a result of information received from this survey:

Mr/Ms/Mrs: _____

Address: _____

Post Code _____

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3. Roche V (1987) Lefroy Hostel Staff Training Report. Technical Report No 3, Centre for the Development of Human Resources, WACAE, Perth.
4. Underwood R (1988) Normalisation Training Project : An Evaluation Study. Technical Report No 4, Centre for the Development of Human Resources, WACAE, Perth.
5. Cocks E (1988) Final Report : Normalisation Training Project - 1987. Technical Report No 5, Centre for the Development of Human Resources, WACAE, Perth.
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9. Stehlik D & Underwood R (1988) A Training Program for RMO Co-ordinators. Technical Report No 9, Centre for the Development of Human Resources, WACAE, Perth.
10. Cocks E, Wills, D and Croft J (1988) Program Development for the Needs, Strategies and Future Directions of the Training Program. A Workshop Training Manual. Technical Report No 10, Centre for the Development of Human Resources, WACAE, Perth.
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- Underwood R & Sheridan B (1989) Information Technology in Youth Agencies : A Rural Perspective Technical Report No 15, Centre for the Development of Human Resources, WACAE, Perth.
- Underwood R & Sheridan B (1989) Perspectives on Income, Accommodation, and Services for the Aged: Proceedings of the WACOTA Forum held for Seniors' Week on Thursday 13 April 1989. Technical Report No 16, Centre for the Development of Human Resources, WACAE, Perth.